

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL POSS DUPE

PAGE 01 RABAT 01777 01 OF 02 101825Z

43

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 ACDA-05 AGR-05

AID-05 CEA-01 CEQ-01 CG-00 CIAE-00 CIEP-01 OFA-01

COME-00 DLOS-03 DODE-00 DOTE-00 EB-07 EPA-01 ERDA-05

FEAE-00 FMC-01 H-02 INR-07 INT-05 JUSE-00 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 NSF-01 OES-03 OMB-01 PA-01 PM-03

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00 /128 W

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P R 101710Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5118

INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMCONSUL CASABLANCA

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL TANGIER

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 RABAT 1777

STATE PASS OIF/NMFS/NOAA/DOC - KRAVANJA

COPENHAGEN FOR RFA; CASABLANCA FOR RFA;

GENEVA FOR LOS DELEGATION

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PLOS EFIS MO SP

SUBJ: SECOND MOROCCAN-SPANISH NAVAL INCIDENT

REF: A. USDAO RABAT 1R 6865 009075 (NOTAL)

B. USDAO MADRID 1R 6889 011975 (NOTAL)

C. RABAT 1662

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PAGE 02 RABAT 01777 01 OF 02 101825Z

1. SUMMARY: SECOND MOROCCAN-SPANISH NAVAL INCIDENT

INVOLVING SPANISH TRAWLERS FISHING IN MOROCCAN EXCLUSIVE ZONE HAS FURTHER INCREASED TENSION BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES. GOM AND GOS REPORTED TO HAVE AGREED TO EXCHANGE TWO MOROCCAN SAILORS NOW DETAINED IN SPAIN FOR SPANISH FISHING VESSEL AND CREW HELD HERE AND APPEARS THAT BOTH WISH TO KEEP LID ON FOR MOMENT. HOWEVER, POLITICAL AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS ON BOTH SIDES ENTAIL RISKS FOR THE FUTURE. END SUMMARY.

2. ACCORDING TO LOCAL PRESS REPORTS APRIL 8, SECOND MOROCCAN-SPANISH NAVAL INCIDENT IN LESS THAN A WEEK TOOK PLACE APRIL 7 WHEN TWO SPANISH NAVY VESSELS INTERVENED IN SEIZURE BY GOM PATROL CRAFT OF TWO SPANISH BOATS ALLEGEDLY FISHING IN EXCLUSIVE MOROCCAN ZONE. SPANISH WARSHIPS FREED ONE OF TWO TRAWLERS AND TOOK IT, WITH TWO MOROCCAN SAILORS WHO HAD BOARDED IT, TO CADIZ. SECOND TRAWLER ESCORTED BY MOROCCAN PATROL CRAFT TO A MOROCCAN PORT. FOR DETAILS, SEE REFS A AND B.

3. SPANISH EMBASSY IN RABAT MAINTAINS THAT TRAWLERS WERE OUTSIDE MOROCCAN EXCLUSIVE FISHING ZONE AS DEFINED BY MOROCCANS THEMSELVES: SUCH ZONE 70 MILES WIDE EXCEPT OFF COAST OF ANOTHER NATION. SPAIN IS AFFECTED BOTH TO THE SOUTH IN WATERS BETWEEN MOROCCO AND CANARY ISLANDS AND IN NORTH, BEGINNING ALONG SOUTHERN SPANISH COAST WEST OF GIBRALTAR AND EXTENDING EASTWARD THROUGH STRAIT. SPANISH EMBASSY NOTES THAT MOROCCAN LAW SPECIFIES THAT WHEN THERE IS LESS THAN 70 MILES BETWEEN MOROCCAN COAST AND SHORES OF ANOTHER NATION, MEDIAN LINE PRINCIPLE IS APPLIED. AT POINT OF SEIZURE SEA WAS 65 MILES WIDE, SPANISH MAINTAIN, AND VESSELS WERE 35 MILES FROM MOROCCO AND 30 MILES FROM SPAIN. SINCE MEDIAN POINT WOULD IN THEORY BE 32.5 MILES, SPANISH HERE CONTEND THAT BOATS WERE OUTSIDE EXCLUSIVE ZONE. (ONE APRIL 9 MOROCCAN NON-GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER ACCOUNT CARRIED SPANISH NEWS AGENCY VERSION THAT BOATS WERE 35 MILES FROM MOROCCO AND 30 MILES FROM SPAIN.)

4. SPANISH EMBASSY HAS REACTED CALMLY, NOTING THAT SEMI-OFFICIAL MOROCCAN PRESS COVERAGE OF INCIDENT, IN CONTRAST WITH MORE INFLAMMATORY ACCOUNTS APPEARING IN NON-GOVERNMENTAL PAPERS, WAS VERY RESTRAINED. SPANISH EMBASSY ALSO TELLS
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PAGE 03 RABAT 01777 01 OF 02 101825Z

US THAT THE SIX CAPTURED FISHERMEN ARE BEING TREATED WITH GREAT COURTESY IN TANGIER, WHERE EMBASSY SAYS THEY WERE BROUGHT ASHORE. (SPANISH SPECULATE THAT SEMI-OFFICIAL PRESS INFERENCE THAT INCIDENT TOOK PLACE OFF LARACHE RATHER THAN FARTHER NORTH MAY HAVE BEEN INTENDED TO FUZZ EXCLUSIVE ZONE ISSUE FOR PUBLIC CONSUMPTION.) TANGIER AUTHORITIES' ATTITUDE, SPANISH NOTE, CONTRASTS SHARPLY WITH BELLICOSE ACTIONS OF MOROCCAN PATROL CRAFT CAPTAIN. THEY ADD THAT, WHILE GOS HAS VIGOROUSLY PROTESTED INCIDENT, GOM HAS SO FAR REMAINED SILENT ON OFFICIAL LEVEL.

5. NEVERTHELESS, SPANISH EMBASSY PERCEIVES DEFINITE INCREASE IN TENSION AS RESULT OF INCIDENTS. ACCORDING TO SPANISH, DECISION TO INTERVENE TAKEN BY NAVAL CAPTAIN GENERAL IN CADIZ, AND IT QUITE POSSIBLE THAT, AT TIME TRAWLERS MADE APPEAL FOR ASSISTANCE, THEY WERE INSIDE WHAT MOROCCANS CONSIDER THEIR ZONE. NAVAL COMMANDER'S DECISION MAY HAVE BEEN INFLUENCED NOT ONLY BY LAST WEEK'S CLASH OFF MELILLA (REF C) BUT BY RECENT UNREPORTED INCIDENT IN WHICH THREE TRAWLERS, RETURNING EMPTY TO SPAIN FROM AGADIR, WHERE THEY HAD PAID FINES FOR TRESPASSING IN EXCLUSIVE ZONE, WERE FIRED UPON BY MOROCCAN PATROL CRAFT BEFORE BEING ALLOWED TO PROCEED. THIS BACKGROUND, SPANISH BELIEVE, MAY HAVE CAUSED CAPTAIN GENERAL'S DECISION TO TAKE FIRM ACTION.

6. SPANISH EMBASSY INSISTS THAT GOS POLICY WITH RESPECT TO MOROCCAN EXCLUSIVE ZONE HAS NOT CHANGED. ZONE WILL CONTINUE TO BE RECOGNIZED FOR FISHING PURPOSES IF NOT JURIDICALLY. SPANISH ADD THAT APRIL 7 INCIDENT IN WHICH SPANISH BELIEVED TTAWLERS TO BE OUTSIDE ZONE WAS FIRST OF ITS KIND SINCE AT LEAST SEPTEMBER OF 1974 AND PROBABLY SINCE FISHING AGREEMENT SIGNED IN JANUARY 1974. (IN MELILLA CLASH REPORTED REF C., SPANISH EMBASSY INDICATES, BOATS WERE IN WHAT SPANISH CLAIM, AND MOROCCANS HAVE UNTIL NOW RECOGNIZED, AS SPANISH TERRITORIAL WATERS.)

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PAGE 01 RABAT 01777 02 OF 02 101914Z

43

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 ACDA-05 AGR-05

AID-05 CEA-01 CEQ-01 CG-00 CIAE-00 CIEP-01 OFA-01

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FEAE-00 FMC-01 H-02 INR-07 INT-05 JUSE-00 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 NSF-01 OES-03 OMB-01 PA-01 PM-03

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00 /128 W

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P R 101710Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5119
INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMCONSUL CASABLANCA
USMISSION GENEVA
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 RABAT 1777

7. QUESTION NOW, SPANISH HERE HAVE SAID, IS HOW MUCH MOROCCANS WANT TO HEAT UP ISSUE. IN THIS CONNECTION, SPANISH HAVE HEARD THAT GOM CONSIDERING MANDATORY PRISON SENTENCES IN FUTURE FOR CAPTAINS OF SEIZED TRAWLERS. RELIABLE SOURCE INFORMED US APRIL 10, HOWEVER, THAT EXCHANGE IS EXPECTED TO TAKE PLACE SAME DAY.

8. WE HAVE NO FIRM INDICATIONS OF PARAMETERS OF GOM NAVAL POLICY, BUT MOROCCAN NAVY SOURCE HAS TOLD USDAO RABAT THAT CHAIN OF COMMAND RUNS DIRECTLY FROM KING TO PATROL BOAT CAPTAIN. DAO HERE HAS ALSO HEARD THAT GOM ARRESTING OFFICER IS NORMALLY GIVEN GENEROUS SHARE OF CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 RABAT 01777 02 OF 02 101914Z

ILLICIT CATCHES SEIZED.

9. COMMENT: TO JUDGE FROM OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH SPANISH HERE, APRIL 7 INCIDENT COULD REPRESENT ONE-TIME SPANISH SHOW OF FORCE AS SIGNAL TO MOROCCANS TO AVOID FURTHER PROVOCATIONS, AND GOS SEEMS TO WANT TO KEEP LID ON FOR MOMENT.

10. OUR GUESS IS THAT MOROCCANS ALSO NOT ANXIOUS AT PRESENT TO BLOW UP PROBLEM. APRIL 7 INCIDENT RECEIVED ONLY BRIEFEST NEWS COVERAGE IN APRIL 10 PRESS, WHICH NOTED SPAIN HAD OPENED URGENT NEGOTIATIONS WITH MOROCCO ON MATTER. IF EXCHANGE OF CAPTURED TRAWLER AND CREW FOR MOROCCAN SAILORS HELD IN CADIZ OCCURS QUICKLY, AS SOURCE CITED PARA 7 INFORMED US WOULD BE CASE, THIS IS OF COURSE STRONG INDICATION OF MUTUAL DESIRE TO DAMP DOWN TENSION AND BACK OFF FROM RECENT TOUGH STANCE.

11. THERE ARE, HOWEVER, DESTABILIZING FACTORS IN SITUATION. THERE IS ALWAYS POSSIBILITY THAT INCIDENTS MIGHT BE CREATED IN FUTURE FOR POLITICAL REASONS IN CONTEXT GOM TERRITORIAL AS WELL AS FISHING CLAIMS VIS-A-VIS SPAIN. GIVEN SPANISH INCLINATION TO REACT FIRMLY, SUCH TACTICS RISKY AND ALSO WOULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE IN DETRACTING FROM IMAGE

OF REASONABLENESS GOM HAS SOUGHT TO CREATE ON TERRITORIAL
ISSUE. IN ADDITION, REPORTED PECUNIARY INTEREST OF GOM
CAPTAINS COULD FURTHER COMPLICATE AFFAIRS, PERHAPS ENCOURAGING
DELIBERATE MISCALCULATIONS OF DISTANCES FROM MOROCCAN SHORES
OR UNUSUAL DEGREE OF ZEAL IN HOT PURSUIT BEYOND MOROCCAN ZONE.
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